

THE EPOCH TIMES

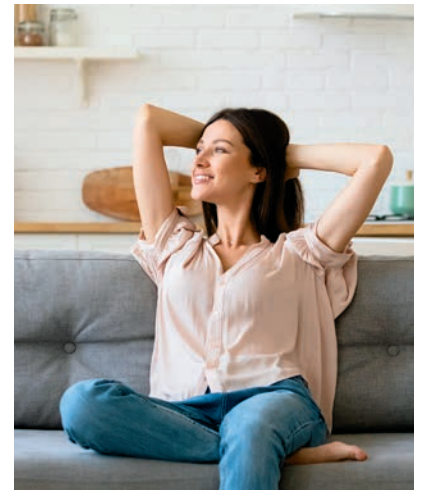
MIND &

BODY

CALEB JONES/UNSPLASH

FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

We learn to trust as children, when our life is marked by dependency.



Feel lighter and more fulfilled by making progress on that important task.

MINDSET MATTERS

Do the Thing You'll Wish You Had Done

Leave fewer regrets by taking small steps, day-by-day

JAY HARRINGTON

How many times have you looked back and regretted things you wanted to do but never did?

If you're anything like me, it's probably more than you'd like to admit. I have a did-not-do regret list a mile long. Some things are relatively trivial, others quite significant.

- I wish I had worked harder to excel as a college athlete.
- I wish I had traveled more during my 20s.
- I wish (and still do) that I was better at staying in touch with family and friends.
- I wish I hadn't waited so long to move with my family to the place we now call home.
- I wish I hadn't taken on so much student debt during law school.

Every year, as the calendar turns from December to January, I tend to mull over what I did and did not do in the year prior. It may not be the right way to view things, but the "did not do" portion tends to hold more significance. The things I wanted to do but never moved forward on loom larger.

For example, there is a book I want to write—I've been talking about it forever—but other than an outline I made little progress on it. Granted, I did write two books last year during quarantine, but not THE book I've been meaning to write. There is clearly some form of resistance (almost certainly self-constructed resistance) that's stopping me from making progress.

And guess what: The book I didn't write holds more space in my mind than the two I did.

I think, "If I had just devoted a bit of consistent time and effort, I could have at least written a few chapters by now." And that's undoubtedly true. And so I regret.

I know I'm not alone in this. In fact, research shows that more people regret things they didn't do than the things they did, even if things they did turned out badly. This makes sense,

Continued on Page 7

The Trust Imperative

Human beings depend on trusting relationships, and suffer deeply when trust is broken

CONAN MILNER

Almost anyone with an email account has heard from a Nigerian prince offering them millions to help them transfer some money.

And we've all heard stories of people—often friends or loved ones—falling for a phone scammer pretending to be a govern-

When trust breaks down, so does our connection to each other.

ment agent asking for money or identity information.

And then there is the internet itself, the Wild West of deception where ads popping up in social media feeds and on legitimate websites promise deals on items that turn out to have been too good to be true.

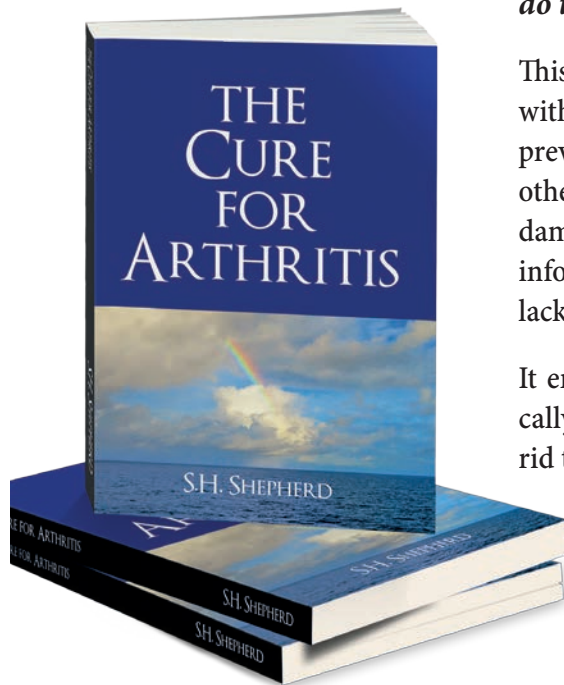
We live in an era of dishonesty, when politicians let us down so often we take it for granted and companies promise their products will change our lives, which they never do. Those fast food burgers look nothing like the picture on the menu and even our egg cartons lie to us, showing happy chickens in open fields when the reality is closer to a concentration camp.

It is little wonder that people don't give their trust as easily as they used to. According to a 2019 report measuring public trust since the 1950s, only 17 percent of Americans today say they can trust elected officials do what is right "just about always" (three percent) or "most of the time" (14 percent).

Compare that to when the study began asking about trust in 1958, where about three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing almost always or most of the time.

Continued on Page 6

The only way to cure arthritis is by attacking its underlying causes



Copyright 2020, 240 pages
Available on Amazon.com

There is a sure cure for arthritis. But many people are not aware of it, nor do they practice it.

This book explains how to effectively deal with the underlying causes of arthritis to prevent the disease from spreading to other parts of the body and to reverse the damage already done by the disease, information that is needed, but sorely lacking, in this age of information.

It enables those who suffer from practically any type of arthritis to do more than rid themselves of its symptoms.

When the knowledge of how to effectively deal with arthritis is put into practice, arthritic patients lose their pains and inflammation and recover from the disease.

Analysis of national and world problems must include a spiritual perspective in order to arrive at a balanced understanding of root causes and their respective solutions.

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THE EPOCH TIMES
TRUTH AND TRADITION

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Zap Inflammation, Heart Disease Risk With Yellow Vegetables

Diet plays a crucial role in causing inflammation—and offers delicious ways to reverse it

Certain diets have been shown to increase inflammation in your body, which then sets the stage for heart disease and stroke later in life. Yet there are also diets that can save the day, including those rich in yellow vegetables, red wine, and coffee, according to research published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* in November 2020.

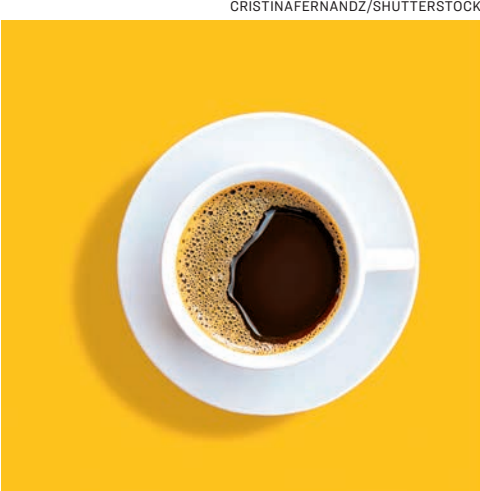
Chronic inflammation has been shown to play a role in the development of heart disease and stroke as well as insulin resistance and Type 2 diabetes. Unlike acute inflammation used by the body to fight infections and help speed up healing, chronic inflammation results in the immune system pumping out white blood cells and chemical messengers continually, making the body believe it's under constant attack.

Inflammation may occur in response to stress, pollution, and other environmental exposures, and even fatty buildup, or atherosclerosis, inside the arterial walls, potentially resulting in the formation of harmful blood clots.

Diet's Inflammatory Potential

The researchers followed men and women from the Nurses' Health Studies I and II, starting in 1986 with up to 32 years of follow up. More than 210,000 participants were included in the analysis after they excluded participants with missing diet information or those who were previously diagnosed with heart disease, stroke, or cancer.

The subjects completed food frequency questionnaires every four years, and the team evaluated diet's inflammatory po-



Coffee and tea do more than offer us a bit of energy, they also provide disease-fighting antioxidants.

People eating pro-inflammatory diets had a 46 percent higher heart disease risk and a 28 percent higher stroke risk.

COVID-19

A Healthy Microbiome Builds a Strong Immune System

Research reveals beneficial bacteria living inside us could be one key to fighting COVID-19

ANA MALDONADO-CONTRERAS

You may not know it, but you have an army of microbes living inside of you that you depend on to fight off threats, including the virus that causes COVID-19.

In the past two decades, scientists have learned our bodies are home to more bacterial cells than human ones. This community of bacteria that lives in and on us—called the microbiome—resembles a company, with each microbe species performing specialized jobs but all working to keep us healthy. In the gut, the bacteria balance the immune response against pathogens. These bacteria ensure the immune response is effective but not so violent that it causes collateral damage to the host.

Bacteria in our gut can elicit an effective immune response against viruses that not only infect the gut, such as norovirus and rotavirus, but also those infecting the lungs, such as the flu virus. The beneficial gut microbes do this by ordering specialized immune cells to produce potent antiviral proteins that ultimately eliminate viral infections. And the body of a person lacking these beneficial gut bacteria won't have as strong an immune response to invading viruses. As a result, infections might go unchecked, taking a toll on health.

I am a microbiologist fascinated by the

ways bacteria shape human health. An important focus of my research is figuring out how the beneficial bacteria populating our gut combat disease and infection. My most recent work focuses on the link between a particular microbe and the severity of COVID-19 in patients. My ultimate goal is to figure out how to enhance the gut microbiome with diet to evoke a strong immune response—for SARS-CoV-2 and all other pathogens.

How Do Resident Bacteria Keep You Healthy?

Our immune defense is part of a complex biological response against harmful pathogens, such as viruses or bacteria. However, because our bodies are inhabited by trillions of mostly beneficial bacteria, viruses, and fungi, activation of our immune response is tightly regulated to distinguish between harmful and helpful microbes.

Our bacteria are spectacular companions diligently helping prime our immune system defenses to combat infections. A seminal study found that mice treated with antibiotics that eliminate bacteria in the gut exhibited an impaired immune response. These animals had low counts of virus-fighting white blood cells, weak antibody responses, and poor production of a protein that is vital for combating viral infection and modulating the immune response.



Yellow vegetables such as pumpkin, yellow peppers, beans, and carrots are high in antioxidants and fiber, both important to reducing your risk of disease.

tential via a food-based empirical dietary inflammatory pattern (EDIP) score, pre-defined according to levels of three systemic inflammatory biomarkers. The team found 15,837 cases of cardiovascular disease, including 9,794 coronary heart disease and 6,174 stroke cases.

Using an empirically developed, food-based dietary index, the study concluded that dietary patterns with higher inflammatory potential were linked to a greater rate of cardiovascular disease.

"Our study is among the first to link a food-based dietary inflammatory index with long-term risk of cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Jun Li, lead study author and nutrition research scientist at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in a news release.

The food-based pro-inflammatory dietary index was based on 18 predefined food groups that showed the biggest associations with higher inflammatory

markers. It showed that the participants consuming pro-inflammatory diets had a 46 percent higher heart disease risk as well as a 28 percent higher stroke risk, versus those consuming anti-inflammatory diets.

Winners, Losers in Reducing Inflammation

Certain foods emerged as major contributors to the pro-inflammatory dietary index. The researchers suggest limiting intake of these foods, which include refined sugars and grains, fried food, soda, and processed red and organ meat. On the other hand, they recommended consuming foods that have higher levels of antioxidants and fiber, helping fight inflammation. These include the following:

- Green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, cabbage, and arugula
- Yellow vegetables such as pumpkin, yellow peppers, beans, and carrots
- Whole grains

• Coffee, tea, and wine

Additional evidence from U.S. and European cohort studies and meta-analyses indicates that long-term intake of increased amounts of red meat, particularly processed meat, is tied to an increased risk of total mortality, heart disease, colorectal cancer, and Type 2 diabetes. The risk is seen in both men and women.

Other foods with anti-inflammatory effects may also be useful for fighting heart disease. This includes fish oil, which is beneficial against chronic heart failure. An anti-inflammatory effect may also be a key factor in the decreased risk of certain chronic diseases associated with higher intakes of anthocyanins and flavonols, nutrients found in abundance in specific fruits and vegetables.

Taken consistently, aged garlic extract may also be beneficial in preventing chronic diseases associated with low-grade inflammation in adults with obe-

sity. Even a 12-week intake of yogurt with a certain probiotic strain (OLL2712) has been found to prevent the aggravation of chronic inflammation and insulin resistance in pre-diabetic adults.

Learn more about inflammation and its links to chronic diseases such as heart disease and stroke through almost 3,000 medical abstracts on the GreenMedInfo.com database.

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In another study, mice were fed *Lactobacillus* bacteria, commonly used as probiotics in fermented food. These microbes reduced the severity of influenza infection. The *Lactobacillus*-treated mice didn't lose weight and had only mild lung damage compared with untreated mice. Similarly, others have found that treatment of mice with *Lactobacillus* protects against different subtypes of influenza virus and human respiratory syncytial virus—the major cause of viral bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children.

Chronic Disease and Microbes

Patients with chronic illnesses, including Type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease exhibit a hyperactive immune system that fails to recognize a harmless stimulus. This pattern is linked to an altered gut microbiome.

In these chronic diseases, the gut microbiome lacks bacteria that activate immune cells that block the response against harmless bacteria in our guts. Such alteration of the gut microbiome is also observed in babies delivered by cesarean section, individuals consuming a poor diet, and the elderly.

In the United States, 117 million individuals—about half the adult population—suffer from Type 2 diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, or a combination of them. That suggests that half of the American adults carry a faulty microbiome army.

Research in my laboratory focuses on identifying gut bacteria that are critical for creating a balanced immune system, which fights life-threatening bacterial and viral infections while tolerating the beneficial bacteria in and on us.

Given that diet affects the diversity of

bacteria in the gut, my lab studies how diet can be used as a therapy for chronic diseases. Using different foods, people can shift their gut microbiome to one that boosts a healthy immune response.

A fraction of patients infected with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 disease, develop severe complications that require hospitalization in intensive care units. What do many of those patients have in common? Old age and chronic diet-related diseases such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

Black and Latino people are disproportionately affected by obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, all of which are linked to poor nutrition. Thus, it isn't a coincidence that these groups have suffered more deaths from COVID-19 compared with whites. This is the case not only in the United States but also in Britain.

Our immune system works in concert with an ecosystem of microbes living inside of us.

Discovering Microbes That Predict COVID-19 Severity

The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired me to shift my research and explore the role of

the gut microbiome in the overly aggressive immune response against SARS-CoV-2 infection.

My colleagues and I have hypothesized that critically ill SARS-CoV-2 patients with conditions such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease exhibit an altered gut microbiome that aggravates acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Acute respiratory distress syndrome, a life-threatening lung injury, in SARS-CoV-2 patients is thought to develop from a fatal overreaction of the immune response called a cytokine storm that causes an uncontrolled flood of immune cells into the lungs. In these patients, their own uncontrolled inflammatory immune response, rather than the virus itself, causes severe lung injury and multi-organ failures that lead to death.

Several studies described in one recent review have identified an altered gut microbiome in patients with COVID-19. And some companies including Seres Therapeutics, 4d Pharma PLC, Evelo Biosciences, VEDANTA bioscience, and Finch Therapeutics have recently attracted investor attention for their work on microbiome-based therapies for diseases including cancer, depression, and inflammatory bowel diseases.

Identification of specific bacteria within the microbiome that could predict COVID-19 severity is lacking.

To address this question, my colleagues and I recruited COVID-19 hospitalized patients with severe and moderate symptoms. We collected stool and saliva samples to determine whether bacteria within the gut and oral microbiome could predict COVID-19 severity. The identification of microbiome markers that can predict the clinical outcomes of COVID-19 disease is key to help prioritize patients needing urgent treatment.

We demonstrated, in a paper that hasn't yet been peer reviewed, that the composition of the gut microbiome is the strongest predictor of COVID-19 severity compared to the patient's clinical characteristics com-

monly used to do so. Specifically, we identified that the presence of a bacterium in the stool—called *Enterococcus faecalis*—was a robust predictor of COVID-19 severity. Not surprisingly, *Enterococcus faecalis* has been associated with chronic inflammation.

Enterococcus faecalis collected from feces can be grown outside of the body in clinical laboratories. Thus, an *E. faecalis* test might be a cost-effective, rapid, and relatively easy way to identify patients who are likely to require more supportive care and therapeutic interventions to improve their chances of survival.

But it isn't yet clear from our research what is the contribution of the altered microbiome in the immune response to SARS-CoV-2 infection. A recent study has shown that SARS-CoV-2 infection triggers an imbalance in immune cells called T regulatory cells that are critical to immune balance.

Bacteria from the gut microbiome are responsible for the proper activation of those T-regulatory cells. Thus, researchers like me need to take repeated patient stool, saliva, and blood samples over a longer time frame to learn how the altered microbiome observed in COVID-19 patients can modulate COVID-19 disease severity, perhaps by altering the development of the T-regulatory cells.

As a Latina scientist investigating interactions between diet, microbiome, and immunity, I must stress the importance of better policies to improve access to healthy foods, which lead to a healthier microbiome. It's also important to design culturally sensitive dietary interventions for black and Latino communities. While a good-quality diet might not prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection, it can treat the underlying conditions related to its severity.

Ana Maldonado-Contreras is an assistant professor of microbiology and physiological systems at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. This article was first published on The Conversation.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Ancient Wisdom on Predicting a Pandemic

Chinese medicine and traditional knowledge offer insight into the cause of terrible events

NTD STAFF

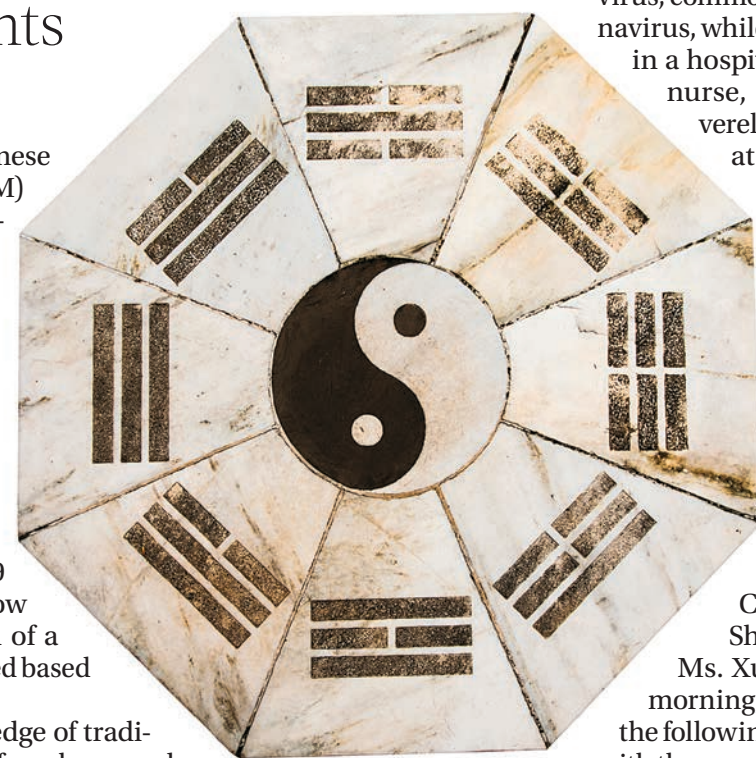
Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) is far more profound than just the techniques of applying herbal formulas and acupuncture that most people are familiar with.

Dr. Shu Rong, a TCM expert living in Cambridge, England, recently shared her experience of treating a COVID-19 patient remotely, and how the outbreak and trend of a pandemic can be predicted based on an age-old theory.

Shu gained her knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine from her grandfather in a family lineage of teaching that has continued through multiple generations for more than 600 years. Over that time, her ancestors gained rich experience treating prior epidemics. In a recent interview with NTD TV, Shu shared a story to illustrate that when a new disease or epidemic breaks out, Western medicine will seek to develop new drugs while a good TCM doctor can often apply ancient principles learned over generations to figure out an effective cure.

In the 1950s, an epidemic broke out in a Chinese city where Shu's grandfather had a Chinese medicine clinic. Many patients went to hospitals seeking treatment because people at the time thought TCM was backward compared to Western methods. Some 70 patients, a relative minority, sought help from Shu's grandfather. While many who went to hospitals died in the epidemic, all of the people who received treatment from Shu's grandfather were healed.

This incident had a major effect on the medical community in the city. Many young Western medicine doctors decided to "change careers"—and become appren-



Insights from the "I Ching," an ancient Chinese text, have aligned with historic events of devastating consequence.

A good Chinese medicine doctor can often apply principles learned over generations to find a cure.

tices of Shu's grandfather to learn TCM from scratch.

ICU Nurse Recovered from Severe COVID-19 Symptoms

Shu has had her own similar experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. She treated an ICU nurse last year who was infected by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, commonly known as the novel coronavirus, while tending COVID-19 patients in a hospital in London. The Chinese nurse, surnamed Xu, became severely ill while in self-quarantine at home in late March 2020. When she called Shu seeking treatment, she had been suffering from a high fever for seven days. Although she had taken acetaminophen every day to reduce the fever, it was ineffective. She also had difficulty breathing, tightness in her chest, and profuse sweating, symptoms indicating that the patient was in critical condition by traditional Chinese medicine.

Shu sent packages of herbs to Ms. Xu via express mail the next morning; when the packages arrived the following day, the patient made a tea with them and drank it in the evening. She said she slept soundly for the first time since she became ill, and had neither fever nor sweating. Seven days later, the nurse reported that she was completely recovered.

One of the defining differences between Chinese medicine and Western medicine is how it regards the body's ability to fight disease. Western medicine generally bypasses or even represses the body's immune response, while Chinese medicine tries to work with it and manage imbalances that may be at the root of an illness. One of the major lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic is that many of the people dying have preexisting medical conditions such as diabetes or obesity, which are already major killers in modern society. Chinese medicine tends to pay more attention to preexisting conditions in its treatments, offering tailored approaches, while Western medicine focuses on drugs and surgeries that directly focus on the ailment.

The Special Year of Gengzi and Pandemic Prediction

Another significant difference between the two types of medicine is the amount



of emphasis that Chinese medicine puts on environmental contributors to disease.

"The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine" is considered the highest authority on traditional Chinese medicine. One of the principles noted in the book, called The Five Elements and Six Weathers, explains the impact of climatic and astronomical factors on the natural world and human health.

It's worth noting that there is no civilization on Earth that has had the longevity of the Chinese civilization. China has had one continuous culture, though ever-changing, throughout 5,000 years while other civilizations, from Mesopotamia to Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, have risen and fallen in comparatively brief historical periods. The Chinese civilization, at least prior to the communist revolution in 1949, also put a major emphasis on learning from history.

Lessons from history, including patterns and changes, can be an important element to Chinese medicine.

Shu is an expert on "Five Elements and Six Weathers." To apply this principle, one has to analyze the current year in China's 60-year-cycle system and find out if there is unusual weather in this year.

In the Chinese calendar, the lunar year 2020 is called Gengzi Year (Jan. 25, 2020, to Feb. 11, 2021) and corresponds to the 36th "I Ching" (Book of Changes) hexagram called "Darkening of the Light," which indicates a period when the darkness of stupidity reigns in human affairs, eclipsing the good and brilliant.

Basically, such a year is full of disasters, including natural disasters and political disturbances, Shu explained.

All the Gengzi years are disastrous years for Chinese people: in 1840, the First Opi-

um War with Britain; in 1900, the invasion of Beijing by the Eight-Nation Alliance, a multinational military coalition formed by eight foreign powers; and in 1960, the peak of a three-year Great Famine, during which an estimated 30 million to 40 million Chinese died of starvation.

Every hexagram of a particular year in the Chinese calendar system corresponds to a six-line statement in the "I Ching" and describes the situation in a two-month period. The statement for the final two months of the year (mid-December 2020 to mid-February 2021) says, "There is no light, only obscurity. Someone initially ascended to the top; his future shall be to fall to the earth."

"From the bigger perspective of a nation, some elites may suddenly fall; from the perspective of an individual's health, we may see people with good health suddenly become very ill, either from contracting COVID-19, from heart disease, or hypertension. The tragedy, or the transition, comes all of a sudden and is totally unexpected," Shu said.

An explanation of the "sudden fall" stated by "I Ching" is, "He has failed to fulfill the principles."

Speaking of the new COVID-19 variant emerging in the UK, Shu said the mortality rate remains low even though the variant spreads very quickly. With a pandemic going on, to analyze what may happen next, one has to observe whether the winter weather is normal or not, according to the "Five Elements and Six Weathers" theory.

"Normal weather means the usual amount of rain and temperatures are in the normal range for the region in which you live," Shu explained. "For instance, in the United Kingdom, it should snow around Christmas, but it didn't this year, which

means, the pandemic will only get worse in the following months."

Unusual weather has been observed in many parts of the world this winter. Asia, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, and China all reported record low temperatures in certain regions. In Europe, a historic snowstorm buried Madrid in early January, while several other European countries so far have experienced an unusually warm winter.

Worst Symptoms Described in Chinese Classics

Will there be more serious symptoms when the pandemic worsens? Shu said the answer is already there in the classic works of ancient Chinese medicine.

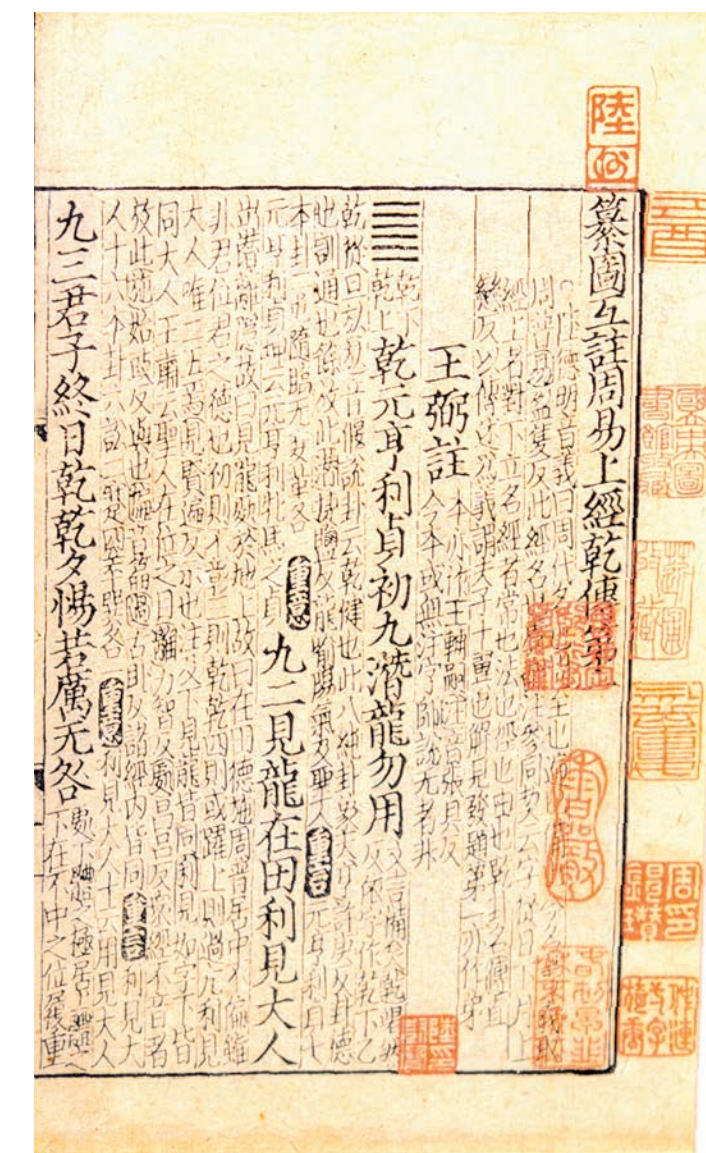
She cited a book called "Discussion of Warm Diseases" that was written by Ye Tianshi, one of the most influential doctors in Chinese medical history who lived from 1666 to 1746 (Qing Dynasty).

In TCM nomenclature, "warm disease" is a general term for all types of externally contracted diseases that cause fever. Epidemic pestilence is a subcategory of warm diseases.

In his book, Ye said that when contracting a warm disease, the patient's lungs are infected first, and the "evil Qi" then attacks the heart-enveloping network if the condition further deteriorates. This network is made up of the tissues surrounding the heart that provide protection in times of pathogen invasion.

It's now well-known that the CCP virus attacks multiple organs. Some patients may experience diarrhea while others develop mental problems, which puzzles many Western medicine doctors.

According to Shu, Ye's concise statement, although appearing to be rather simple,



A page from a Song Dynasty (960-1279) printed book of the I Ching.

Chinese medicine has long viewed winter's chill as key to limiting disease outbreaks. The mild winter we are just finishing bodes ill for the end of COVID-19 by this view.

We must learn to observe climate changes, the situation of all creatures, and the overall health of mankind.

Wang Yongyan, honorary dean, China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences

clarified more than 200 years ago that multiple organ dysfunction is an inherent characteristic of "epidemic pestilence," and the infection follows a relatively fixed path.

"Because the pathogen enters the human body through one's mouth and nose, it will certainly infect the lungs first. For some individuals, the infection stops at this stage and the patient gradually recovers. This is a good scenario. In particular, many patients at this stage have intestinal problems, which actually indicates that he is recovering."

Traditional Chinese medicine considers the lungs and intestines to be an interlinked system, with lungs being the interior and intestines being the exterior. When the lungs are infected and the symptoms move to the intestines, the disease is going outward. In other words, it is being eliminated from the human body, Shu explained.

However, in the worst-case scenario, "evil Qi" goes deeper into the human body to attack the heart-enveloping network.

"The heart is also the key organ in an interlinked system, which includes the brain and the nervous system. This system is related to one's emotional and mental health," Shu said.

When the pathogen is fierce and able to penetrate the protection network of the heart, the patient will display symptoms of brain and nervous system dysfunction, such as talking nonsense, mental disorder, or hallucinations. A study published in the journal Brain in July 2020 found potentially deadly brain disorders may be a symptom of COVID-19, even in people with otherwise mild disease.

At the same time, the heart is responsible for managing the blood and circulatory system. When this system is disrupted, the patient will have both internal bleeding

and observable bleeding from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, Shu explained.

These dire symptoms have already been observed in severely ill COVID-19 patients, with nose bleeds and bleeding from the mouth being the most common. Shu implied that when the pandemic worsens, a lot more patients may suffer more severely as a consequence of previous disease or infection.

She hopes that people remember the importance of upholding principles, and strive to be kind and upright individuals because the main reason for all these misfortunes is from "failing to fulfill principles," according to ancient wisdom in Chinese culture.

Validity of the "5 Elements and 6 Weathers" Theory
Another Chinese medicine scholar predicted the advent of the CCP virus pandemic as early as June 2019 by applying the same theory.

Wang Yongyan, a Chinese academician and the honorary dean of China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences, said at a medical conference in June 2019 that he believed a pandemic would arrive in late December of that year.

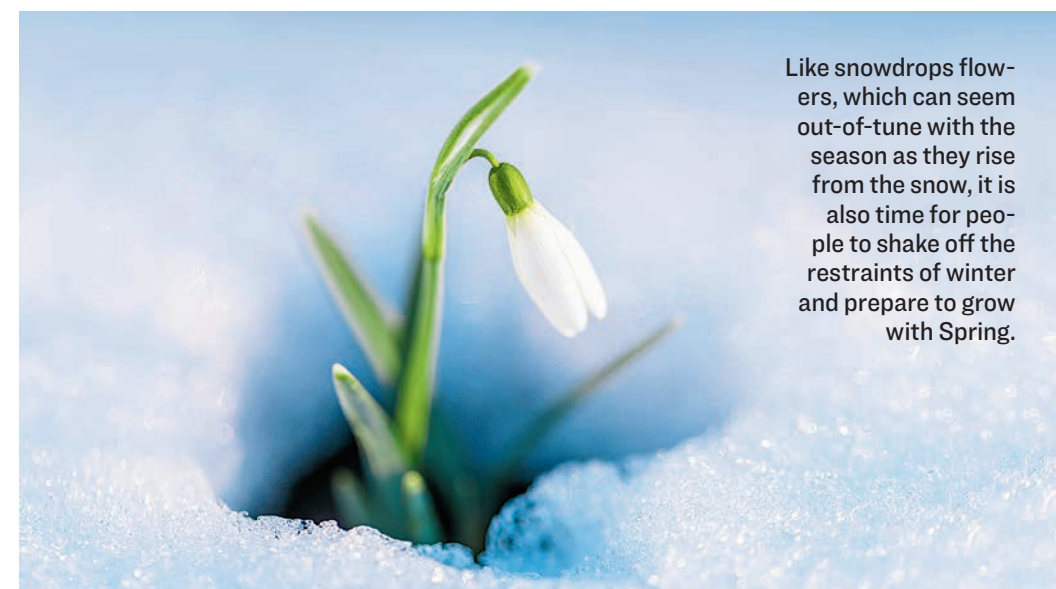
"We must learn to observe climate changes, the situation of all creatures, and the overall health of mankind," Wang said. Based on his observations and application of the "Five Elements and Six Weathers" theory, he concluded that "a pandemic will break out around Dec. 21, and will continue into next spring."

When the CCP virus was raging in China in late January, the video of Wang's speech quickly went viral in China, and the "Five Elements and Six Weathers" theory became a hot topic.

CHINESE WISDOM FOR SEASONAL LIVING

It's Time Stay Upbeat and Set a (Chinese) New Year Resolution

Solar Term: 'Spring Begins' (Feb. 4-19, 2021)



Like snowdrops flowers, which can seem out-of-tune with the season as they rise from the snow, it is also time for people to shake off the restraints of winter and prepare to grow with Spring.

STONE36/SHUTTERSTOCK

MOREEN LIAO

A solar term is a period of about two weeks and is based on the sun's position in the zodiac. Solar terms form the traditional Chinese calendar system. The calendar follows the ancient Chinese belief that living in accordance with nature will enable one to live a harmonious life. This article series explores each of the year's 24 solar terms, offering guidance on how to best navigate the season.

Solar Term: 'Spring Begins'

2021 Dates: Feb. 4-19, 2021

The start of "Spring Begins" falls each year between Feb. 3 and Feb. 5, when the weather remains cold. The spring equinox arrives about 45 days later. At this time, the earth has absorbed enough heat that nature begins to show signs of life—insects start to move their wings and fish swim more actively under the ice.

Is the natural rhythm inside the human body different to other creatures? Traditional Chinese medicine and solar term theory would say no. Accordingly, at this time, we need to rise earlier to absorb the yang energy from the sun, and eat spring vegetables to recharge our body.

The movement of the sun, scientifically

speaking, regulates the four seasons and all living beings on earth. The patterns of agriculture, diet, health, and disease that can be observed through different times of the year can all be correlated to the solar terms. This system is a perfect example of the ancient Chinese belief in the harmony of heaven, earth, and living beings.

There are 24 solar terms in one calendar year, six for each season. Yet there are two solar terms named for spring, suggesting there are two spring arrivals in the same season. Why?

Rise earlier to absorb the yang energy from the sun.

This relates to a philosophical understanding the Chinese hold, in which both the tangible and the intangible (or the natural and supernatural) exist in tandem. A common example is how the traditional Chinese count the age of a newborn baby by including the time it spent in the womb.

In the calendar, "Spring Begins" marks the beginning of the season's incubation, while "Spring Equinox" marks its maturity. The two are normally 45 days apart,

similar to the set period of 280 days between conception and birth.

Yin and yang, the intangible and the tangible, and the concept of five elements are all included within the system of solar term theories. Spring is said to belong to the wood element, which is associated with the liver and uplifting herbs.

Chinese New Year marks the beginning of a new year and usually falls on the Spring Begins solar term. This year the Chinese New Year's Day is on Feb. 12. It is now a perfect time to make a new year resolution and strengthen your faith for a better year ahead with setting right goals for yourself.

Seasonal Eating

• Rice soup: The best food to prepare our organs for the spring season is congee, a rice soup with beans or assorted grains. Soak the grains for at least two hours or overnight, then cook with low heat to produce a thick and nourishing spring pick-me-up food.

• Spring spices: Shallot, onion, leeks, basil, and garlic are very good additives to any dish during this time. Consume these frequently to warm up the body and repel the winter chill.

• Beans: Proteins are essential to support the body turning from Yin to Yang, as

well as supporting good growth for the whole year long. Colorful beans are particularly beneficial, try to have a good combination of green, red, yellow, white, and black to nourish your five elements.

- Tea: Vanilla bean, cinnamon, or chai tea can help kickstart the body into the vigor of spring.
- A good feast: Unlike other solar terms in the year that have a greater focus on what you should or shouldn't eat, Spring Begins is the time you are sort of allowed a good feast. Choose what you enjoy. Even a bit of excess fat or sugar is fine for this time. Just remember to avoid cold or chilled food, as they harm the yang energy inside your body and keep it from rising.

Here are some easy tips to get your body ready for spring, and get rid of winter dullness and accumulated toxins:

- Dry brushing: Use soft brushes with natural animal hair in a circular motion on palms, calves, and thighs. This helps to release toxins, wakes up the senses, and improves circulation. It also helps to remove dead skin cells and beautify and tone the skin.
- Comb your hair: Comb the hair with a wooden brush and use the brush

to massage the scalp, from the top to the center-back of the head. You can also use the fingertips for a gentler massage.

- Chest: For those who often get the flu or cough in the spring, rub sandalwood or frankincense oils onto the center of the chest to prevent coldness from getting into the body through the lungs.
- Foot bath: Vetiver oil is great for warming cold feet; ginger works well, too.
- Start exercising or another healthy ritual: As yang energy is rising inside our bodies at this time of the year, any new routine—especially exercise—is encouraged and easier to keep doing. That's because we're following the natural rhythm of the world, in tune with the energetic patterns of mother nature. Also yang energy helps us to get energy flowing, so you may find it easier to lose fat compared with other terms of the year.

Epoch Times contributor Moreen Liao is a descendant of four generations of traditional Chinese medicine doctors. She is also a certified aromatherapist, former dean of the New Directions Institute of Natural Therapies in Sydney, and the founder of Ausganica, a certified organic cosmetic brand. Visit Ausganica.com.au

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PUBLIC DOMAIN

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As children, we learn to quickly trust and defer to authority figures.

The Trust Imperative

Human beings depend on trusting relationships, and suffer deeply when trust is broken

Continued from Page 1

Trust in everything from doctors, to retailers, to the pharmaceutical industry has fallen, and that has real consequences for our well-being.

You can't see, touch, or taste trust, but you can definitely sense when you have it, and feel when you don't.

This sense weaves the fabric of society together, and it unravels with suspicion and betrayal. We keep trusted companions close, and distance ourselves from those we believe untrustworthy.

We rely on our sense of trust to identify reliable, honest, and upfront people we can rely on without having to constantly question their motives or follow up every statement with an investigation.

Trust does more than make life easier, it makes it bearable.

But what happens when the bond of trust is broken. Research suggests it's more than just a bother—it can be deeply traumatic.

Born to Trust

Why do we hold such strong feelings about trust? According to author and psychiatrist Dr. Peter Breggin, trust is a part of who we are as human beings, and has been since the very beginning.

Because we hold trust in such high regard, deception can be devastating.

"What makes human beings unique is our trust, mutuality, and our cooperation," Breggin said. "When we took down a mammoth, it wasn't because we had fangs, hooves to kick with, or thick hides to protect us. We did it because we cooperated. We trusted each other enough to watch our backs in a brawl with a giant beast."

In a recent paper published in the American Psychological Association Journal, Breggin explains that our need for trust starts at birth. Unlike animals that can take on the world soon after they spring from the womb, humans are born very vulnerable and helpless. We depend on years of dedicated care and nurturing before we can make it on our own.

"There is such an intimacy and dependency that is built into human beings. A human being grows up with a huge need of feeling worthy of love," Breggin said. "We have a huge need to trust somebody."

This experience with parents lays a pattern that plays a major role later in life. We default to a trust that extends others in authority positions, such as politicians. This comes with a risk.

Because we hold trust in such high regard, deception can be devastating.

"That's what destroys us," Breggin said. "We revert to childhood helplessness, and that always gets us into trouble."

Trust is so essential to our mental health that Breggin believes betrayal may be at the root of mental illness. Ask anyone who has been lied to or wronged by someone they trusted deeply: the experience can make you depressed and anxious. You begin to question reality and doubt yourself. Paranoia is an obvious manifestation, but psychosis can be a symptom, too.

"Whether it's bipolar or schizophrenia ... what's really going on if you talk to the person who is hallucinating or lying in bed all day is that they feel like they can't trust anything that's going on around them in the world. And they feel utterly unlovable."

Antipsychotic medication is the standard treatment for extreme cases, but Breggin believes drugs get in the way of his main objective: building trust. His treatment starts with a promise, one that many of his clients have never heard before: "Tell me anything you want and I'll never drug you or force you into a hospital against your will."

"I'm not a miracle worker, but very often about halfway through the conversation, I'll say, 'Do you know you've stopped looking at the hallucination on the ceiling. You stopped looking terrified.' They'll say, 'This is the first break I've had in a month,'" Breggin said.

"I'll say: 'That's because you're trusting me. And we're talking honestly about stuff. And if we can maintain that relationship, you're going to grow and you're going to get better.'"

Too Trusting

Because of the pain that results when your trust is violated, one bad experience may tempt you to cut off everyone as a reflex of self-preservation. Why risk it? But Breggin warns that living without trust doesn't make

you objective, it just makes you paranoid.

It's in our nature to trust, but because we live in a world of scams and mind games, we must also be careful not to blindly give it to any opportunist who asks for it.

Lynell Ross, a director of an online education company, said she learned this lesson the hard way. A few years ago, Ross was helping her sister through a difficult time in her life, but she found that her aid only seemed to create more tension.

"My sister became angrier and angrier at me but wouldn't be honest about why. I kept helping her clean out her house, sell items, and look for a smaller place to downsize," Ross said. "Later, I found out that she wanted to move in with my husband and I, but never asked us directly."

Ross said the situation was so distressing she ended up in the emergency room thinking she was having a heart attack, a common experience for those who have had a panic attack.

Her cardiologist found nothing wrong, so Ross examined her feelings.

"I had been too trusting, and needed to learn the lesson to stop enabling her, and allow her to live with the consequences of her own behavior," she said.

For Ross, her sister's actions represented a form of manipulation. Playing the victim and using guilt to get an advantage are actions that can undermine the trust between two people.

Our trust in elected officials has been challenged by continued dishonesty.

The person carrying out this manipulation may not be entirely aware of their actions. Even these forms of deception, however, can destroy a relationship.

Changing Circumstances

We want to trust others. We crave the connection it brings. But since trust is such a sensitive issue, we may feel the sting of betrayal even when the other person meant us no harm.

Alex Montagu, a New York lawyer and certified meditation teacher, suggests that this confusion may make us too quick to label others untrustworthy.

"As a lawyer, I've seen a fair number of partnership disputes," Montagu said. "Did the partners trust each other when they first entered into the partnership? The answer in all cases is yes. Was that trust merited? The answer invariably is yes. Then why the dispute? The answer is changed circumstances (or in some cases very misplaced expectations as to outcome, skill or performance)."

Montagu's advice to avoid unmet expectations both in personal affairs and in business is to make the terms clear upfront. Clear communication can help us avoid the assumptions and expectations that can

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leave one feeling tricked or deceived.

Our dependence on mass media grew over the past century.

Crumbling Public Trust

Communication and clarity help build trust, while secrecy and deception erode it. But when the details aren't clear, we rely on experience and instinct to guide us in who to trust.

Unfortunately, this sense is only as good as our ability to read the signals and some people are very good at faking these signals. And then there is the way a warm smile and a pretty face telling us the words we want to hear can win our hearts. Such tactics can distract us from a gut feeling that may point to lies and deceit.

Authority figures are notorious for taking advantage of this. Propaganda is designed to capture public trust with an attractive image and bright promises, while managing to minimize or completely obscure the flaws that would give us a clearer picture. Scapegoats and fear can also be used to distract us from looking at the bigger picture and thinking things through. We should know better, but too often we don't.

We're conditioned to trust authority figures in a more intimate way than we may realize. Breggin said it's well established in psychology that we grant authority to others on the same basis we gave it to our parents and caregivers when we were young. It's an inborn process that comes from our early dependence.

"We have to be consciously aware that they are not our parents," Breggin said.

While we teach our children to be wary of strangers, we ourselves may fall into this pattern without even realizing it.

And when that habit of trust in authority figures breaks, it's significant and difficult to repair. The past year has damaged our trust in authorities even more significantly than the downward trend seen for decades. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer reveals that the pandemic and economic crisis, as well as the global outcry over systemic racism, and political instability have led to "an epidemic of misinformation and widespread mistrust of societal institutions and leaders around the world."

The media, which has fed this loss of trust with its never-ending negativity bias, has taken a huge hit in trust as well. Over the past century, our reliance on mainstream media as a trusted source for reliable information had grown strong and cozy. But the Edelman report shows that this relationship is crumbling. It found that 56 percent of Americans now agree with the

We are bombarded by claims from companies and politicians that overpromise and underdeliver.

statement that "journalists and reporters are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations," and that 58 percent think that "most news organizations are more concerned with supporting an ideology or political position than with informing the public."

When Edelman re-pollled Americans after the 2020 election, figures had deteriorated even further.

This loss of trust comes with severe consequences. Just consider what it means to live in a world in which you don't trust the people and institutions that have power over significant aspects of your life. It is little

wonder that depression and anxiety have risen in recent years.

Because trust has such a profound effect on our well-being, Breggin's advice is to put less of it into some distant expert or authority, and more into those with whom you're closest to. Strong relationships based on trust with those we interact with most often can give us a deeper sense of safety in an otherwise uncertain world.

"One of the things we can do to remind ourselves that we believe in a loving God, and that we can see evidence of that God in our lives," Breggin said. "Another great help is to keep personal relationships of trust and love."

It can be comforting to have someone you can rely on. But Breggin cautions us to be careful who we trust, because this bond is a sacred and intimate thing.

That doesn't mean we have to be suspicious and fearful, but it does mean that we should be conscious about what authorities, institutions, and people we defer to without question.

Trust may often be inborn, but it should also be earned—and often verified.

We are bombarded by information that we're unsure we can trust.

MINDSET MATTERS

Do the Thing You'll Wish You Had Done
Leave fewer regrets by taking small steps, day-by-day

Continued from Page 1

since we can't go back in time and do things we dreamed of doing but didn't. We're left only to imagine how life would be different today if we had.

Here's the good news: We can learn from our mistakes and ward off future regrets by taking action now.

But that begs the question: What action to take?

You may have a hope, a dream, a goal that is audacious. Perhaps you want to write a book, start a business, or lead an untethered, nomadic lifestyle. The enormity of the goal makes it feel overwhelming and you don't even know how to start.

I've felt this way many times in my life. Overwhelm was a constant state for me early in my career as a young lawyer in a large law firm.

I remember plenty of moments sitting at a conference room table with documents piled high around me and Thai-food styrofoam containers strewn about. Too often, I had no idea how to even begin tackling what was in front of me.

As I progressed in my career, I learned to look at my projects like a puzzle. When you're doing a puzzle, you need to find the corners first. Once you find the corners, the puzzle takes shape. Then you can start clicking the other pieces into place.

When you think of a project (or any ambitious objective) in its entirety, it's overwhelming. It's hard to know how to start. You need to break it down into its component parts.

There's a logical starting point for every project and that starting point helps clarify what else needs to get done and how to get it done. For example, if you're writing a book, don't try to start by writing the first chap-



ter. First create the table of contents, and then jot down a few bullet points covering what you'll say in each chapter. This will feel more manageable, create some positive momentum, and give you a logical outline for the book.

See how this works? When you're overwhelmed, start with the corners and take it piece by piece.

Also, take it day-by-day. Regardless of what you're working on, you'll make little progress if you're counting on episodic intervals of intense activity. Instead, chip away at it every day and watch the compounding returns on your effort stack up. You can do anything, just not all at once.

But you need to start. Preferably today. Otherwise, you'll regret it.

Jay Harrington is an author, lawyer-turned-entrepreneur, and runs a northern Michigan-inspired lifestyle brand called *Life and Whim*. He lives with his wife and three young girls in a small town and writes about living a purposeful, outdoor-oriented life.

It can be scary to take on a challenge—but feels worse not to.

As in all meaningful relationships, trust is essential between therapists and clients.



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Forget about that endless list of to-dos until you do the one thing right in front of you.

out, meetings, email accountant. Don't overcomplicate this list. It just needs to be a place where everything that needs to be done goes. Don't spend too much time here.

The first thing you'll notice is that doing one thing at a time seems nice—though we have so much else to do.

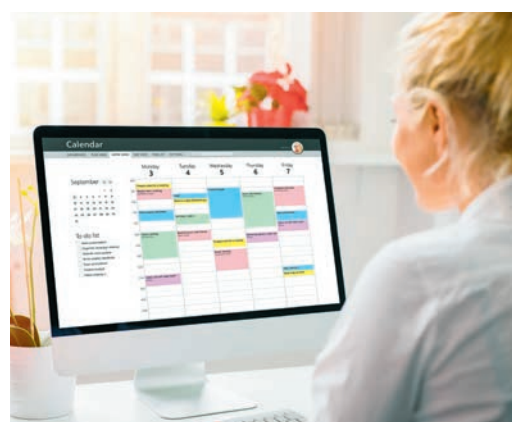
2. Prioritization: Once you have a queue, there needs to be a way to prioritize it so you know what task is the right one to work on right now. For me, I keep this pretty simple: every morning, my first task (after meditation) is to look at my task list (the queue), put things that need to be done today on the Today list, and then order them by priority. What's the most important thing that I need to do today? What's next? What things need to be done at a certain time (2 p.m. team meeting)? Once I've ordered it, it's pretty simple: I work on the top task. Then the next one. If it's 2 p.m., I do my meeting. When the meeting is over, I do the next thing in my queue. Again, don't overcomplicate it.

3. Processing incoming: A task in the queue every day might be to process an inbox. For email, that means when it's time to do my email inbox, I get in there and process it. Answer and archive are the main choices, as much as possible. If it can't be answered right now, I add it to my task list. Keep it simple. The same thing can be done for Slack, Facebook, Whatsapp, and what have you. Make it a task to process these, get in there and reply to what's needed, add anything else that needs to be done to your task list, and then be done.

4. Notes: Sometimes, you'll need to remember things. Make a note. It can be something you keep in Apple Notes, Bear, Notion, Roam, Google Docs, a sticky note, it doesn't matter. Keep a note, so you can go back to it when you need it. If a task you're going to do in the future needs a note, add a link to the note in that task.

It helps, of course, to have some ways of dealing with whatever is in front of you, which is why I also believe in having values or ways of being that are helpful. For me, that's things like integrity, curiosity, compassion, playfulness, purpose, learning, growing, and a full appreciation of life. This stateless protocol is as beautiful a way of living as any other I've tried. It's Zen living.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books, the writer of Zen Habits, a blog with over 2 million subscribers, and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net



Keeping tasks documented and prioritized is a first step in not getting overwhelmed.

robot-like view of humans, dehumanizing in fact.

But there's another way to approach this: you just do what's in front of you right now, in the moment. If you're creating art, you work with what's in front of you on the canvas, in your heart and mind, and create the art right then. This doesn't have to be about all art that came before it, and everything else you need to do. It's just you and this canvas and paint, right now.

We can take on everything like that—wash this dish, fully, without worrying about my taxes. It becomes a moment and act complete in itself.

Then we do the taxes, not worrying about whether we're a good enough person or whether the world will collapse—just do the taxes. Just answer this one email. Just write this one thing. Just speak to this one person. That's the stateless protocol.

Applying the Stateless Protocol to Life

The first thing you'll notice is that doing one thing at a time seems nice—though we have so much else to do.

So this protocol needs simple ways to ensure that we're focusing on the right thing, right now. It's not as simple as doing just one thing. It's best if we are also doing the right thing.

That's why there needs to be a few other elements to the system:

1. Queue: A simple way to track what you need to do right now. This is a task manager, or to-do list. What I do is keep a single list of everything I need to do, split into two parts: what needs to be done today, and what else needs to be done. My current list: grocery shopping, work-

A State of Being Stateless

We all have too much to do—except when we just do what we're doing

LEO BABAUTA

Every day, we are dealing with a thousand things, overrun by tasks and chores. It can become overwhelming.

I'd like to talk about an idea I've been working with, called the stateless protocol. It's meant to reduce the overwhelm and help us to focus and be more present.

Stateless Computing for Humans

In computing, as I understand it, a program will normally try to remember everything. It keeps track of what you've done, where everything is, the state of all kinds of variables. This is fine for a program—computers are pretty good at keeping track of a whole bunch of things.

That's how most of us operate—trying to keep a thousand things in our head, processing new information as it comes in, making a lot of decisions all the time. For humans, who aren't adapted to do this kind of processing, it can be stressful and overwhelming.

Another kind of computer program is called "stateless"—it doesn't track what happened before and store all kinds of information at once. It takes an input from another computer or program, processes it, and spits out a result. It's done. It starts from a blank slate, and takes on the next task. One task at a time, processing it and then moving to the next.

For humans, an example of this is the person on an assembly line—they are supposed to just take the product from the person before them, do their thing to it, and then pass it on. One unassembled product at a time, not worrying about what comes before or after their task. It's a very

Most of us operate by trying to keep a thousand things in our head, processing new information as it comes in, and making constant decisions.



Underprescribed Lifestyle Medicines for a Better, Longer Life

They don't come in pills, but these treatments can eliminate the most common causes of illness

YORAM VODOVOTZ & MICHAEL PARKINSON

The majority of Americans are stressed, sleep-deprived, and overweight. As a result, they suffer from largely preventable lifestyle diseases such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.

But the treatments for these conditions are simple, enjoyable, and often free—even if they do sometimes require you to go against the grain of common habit.

Being overweight or obese is a problem for the 50 percent of adults who suffer high blood pressure, the 10 percent who suffer diabetes, and the 35 percent with pre-diabetes. Public and personal health care costs from these conditions are unaffordable and growing. About 90 percent of the nearly \$4 trillion Americans spend annually for health care in the United States (which includes \$1.5 in public money) is for chronic diseases and mental health conditions. But there are new lifestyle "medicines" that are free that doctors could be prescribing for all their patients. Lifestyle medicine is the clinical application

of healthy behaviors to prevent, treat, and reverse disease. More than ever, research underscores that the "pills" today's physician should be prescribing for patients are the six domains of lifestyle medicine: whole food plant-based eating, regular physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, addiction reduction or elimination, and positive psychology with social connection.

We are a primary care preventive medicine physician and a computational immunologist, both committed to applying state-of-the-art research to inform the clinical practice of lifestyle medicine. Our findings and recommendations were just published in *Frontiers in Medicine*. We highlight the key take-home points for each of the areas below.

Whole-Food, Plant-Based Eating
Diets high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and lower in animal products and highly processed foods have been associated with the prevention of many diseases.

Modern living is killing us with stress, hyper-processed foods, and too much sitting around. To stay healthy requires attending to our lifestyle.

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Underprescribed Lifestyle Medicines for a Better, Longer Life

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These diets have been shown to improve health and even reverse common cardiovascular, metabolic, brain, hormonal, kidney, and autoimmune diseases, as well as 35 percent of all cancers.

We believe that future research should include larger trials or new research methods with emphasis on the quality of diet. This would include more data on the micronutrient composition and protein sources of plant versus animal-based foods—not just the proportion of fat, carbohydrates, and protein. Such trials should include children, as many adult disorders are seeded as early as infancy or in utero.

Regular Physical Activity

For decades, surgeon general's guidelines have emphasized that daily moderate-to-vigorous aerobic physical activity has both immediate and long-term health benefits. For example, why we age and the rate at which we age—chronological age versus biological age—is determined by multiple molecular processes that are directly influenced by physical activity. Scientists are now gaining a better understanding of the cellular and molecular changes that exercise induces to reduce disease risk.

Research priorities for scientists and physicians include obtaining a deeper understanding of the type, intensity, and frequency of activity, and better insights into the molecular and cellular alterations that occur with exercise.

Restorative Sleep

Sleep helps the cells, organs, and entire body to function better. Regular uninterrupted sleep of seven hours per night for adults, 8 to 10 hours for teenagers, and 10 or more for children is necessary for good health.

Though understudied, there is evidence that high-quality sleep can reduce inflammation, immune dysfunction, oxidative stress, and epigenetic modification of DNA, all of which are associated with or cause chronic disease.

Therefore, research into the biological mechanisms that underlie the restorative properties of sleep could lead to environmental or population-based and policy approaches to better align our natural sleep patterns with the demands of daily life.

Stress Management

Though some stress is beneficial, prolonged or extreme stress can overwhelm the brain and body. Chronic stress increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, irritable bowel disease, obesity, depression, asthma, arthritis, autoimmune diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, neurological disorders, and obesity.

One of the most powerful mechanisms to reduce stress and enhance resilience is by eliciting a relaxation response using mind-body therapies and cognitive behavioral therapy.

More research is needed to gain a better understanding of how these therapies work.

Addiction Reduction and Elimination

Many social, economic, and environmental factors have fueled the national rise in substance abuse generally and, most tragically, the opioid epidemic.

Physicians and researchers are beginning to understand the underlying physiology and psychology of addiction.

Yet the continued stigma and disjointed or absent access to services remain a challenge. Clinicians and scientists need to explore how to predict who is more vulnerable to addiction and find ways of preventing it. Treatment that incorporates integrated care focused on all the patient's needs should be prioritized.

Positive Psychology and Social Connection

Maintaining a positive mindset through the practice of gratitude and forgiveness has a significant impact on psychological and subjective well-being, which are, in turn, associated with physical health benefits.

Social connectivity, namely the quantity and quality of our relationships, has perhaps the most powerful health benefits.

Conversely, social isolation—such as living alone, having a small social network, participating in few social activities, and feeling lonely—is associated with greater mortality, increased morbidity, lower immune system function, depression, and cognitive decline.

Further study is needed to uncover how an individual's biology and chemistry change for the better through more social interactions.

Inflammation's Role in Lifestyle-Related Diseases

Unhealthy lifestyle behaviors produce a vicious cycle of inflammation. While inflammation is a healthy, natural way the body fights infections, injury, and stress, too much inflammation actually promotes or exacerbates the diseases described above.

The inflammatory response is complex. We have been using machine learning and computer modeling to understand, predict, treat, and reprogram inflammation—to retain the healing elements while minimizing the detrimental more chronic ones. Scientists are unraveling new mechanisms that explain how chronic stress can turn genes on and off.

Overcoming Challenges and Barriers

We and others who study lifestyle medicine are now discussing how we can leverage all of these approaches to improve clinical studies on the impacts of lifestyle interventions.

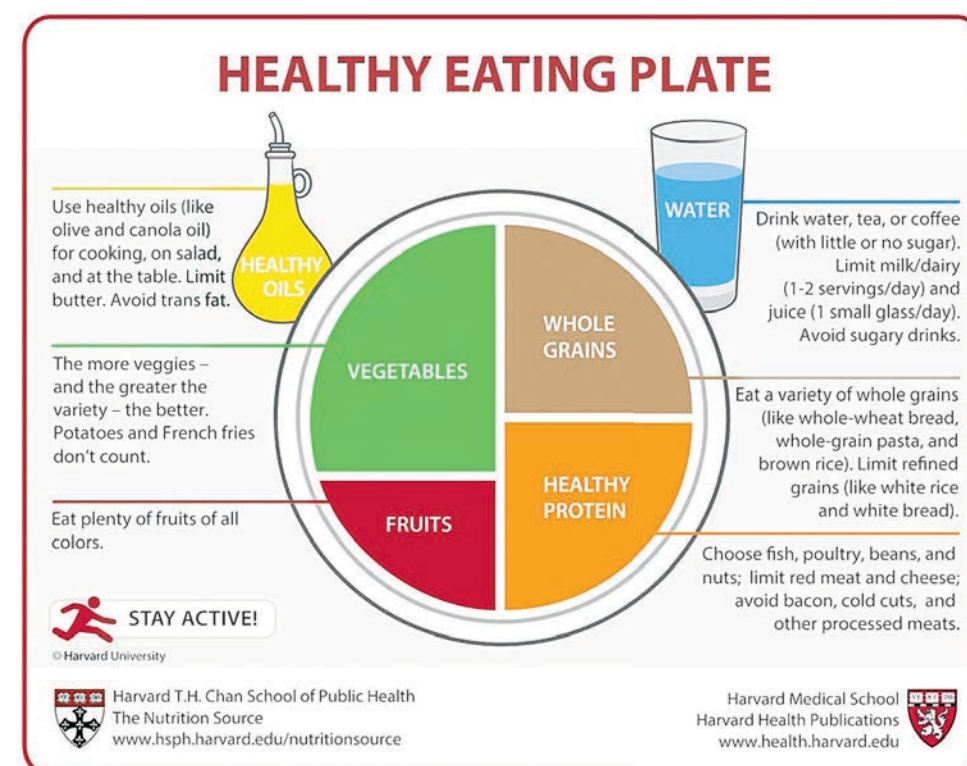
At the same time, we and our colleagues realize that there are environmental challenges and barriers that prevent many people from embracing these lifestyle fixes.

The application of lifestyle medicines is particularly important now because unhealthy lifestyles have caused a pandemic of preventable chronic diseases that is now exacerbating the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately afflicts those with these conditions.

Ask your doctor to "prescribe" these six "pills" for a longer and better life. After all, they're free, work better than or as well as medications, and have no side effects.

Yoram Vodovotz is a professor of surgery at the University of Pittsburgh, and Michael Parkinson is the senior medical director of health and productivity and UPMC Health Plan and WorkPartners at the University of Pittsburgh. This article was first published on The Conversation.

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Use the Healthy Eating Plate as an evidence-based guide for creating healthy, balanced meals.

OVERTREATMENT

Why So Many People Overuse Antibiotics

Profit and personal relationships fuel a dangerous rise in antibiotic overuse

PATTI VERBANAS

A mistaken belief that antibiotics are beneficial for a broad array of conditions leads to their overuse, researchers report.

The new study also finds that overuse occurs because doctors are willing to prescribe them when patients ask for medications.

Researchers looked at more than 200 peer-reviewed studies to examine the causes behind antibiotic overuse, which can lead to harmful bacteria becoming drug-resistant and can cause harmful effects on the microbiome, the collection of beneficial germs that live in and on our bodies.

The global use of antibiotics between 2000 and 2015 increased 39 percent, with a 77 percent increase in low- and middle-income countries, says Martin Blaser, director of the Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine at Rutgers University and lead author of the study in *BioEssays*.

Here, he discusses the health concerns of overuse of antibiotics in children and adults—and how the findings highlight the need for more education for both physicians and patients.

FUTURITY: What health concerns result from the disruption of the microbiome by antibiotics?

MARTIN BLASER: In children, improper antibiotic use can alter the microbiome while their immunological, metabolic, and neural systems are developing. Epidemiological studies associate antibiotic exposure with an increased risk of disease of allergic, metabolic, and cognitive disorders that have grown more common in children during the antibiotic era.

In adults, there is increasing evidence that antibiotics may enhance risk for metabolic and neoplastic diseases, including diabetes, kidney stones, and growths in the colon and rectum that can lead to cancer.

FUTURITY: What are the trends you find in antibiotic use?

BLASER: Studies in the United States, United Kingdom, and China found numerous online pharmacies selling antibiotics without a prescription. This problem also is large in low- to middle-income countries, where 60 percent of antibiotics are sold without prescriptions, often by untrained medical practitioners.

Perhaps of special concern during the COVID-19 pandemic is the finding that telemedicine services are another potential source of questionable antibiotic sales in the United States. A recent analysis found that patients with acute respiratory infections were more often prescribed

Parents can sometimes equate antibiotics to more harmless vitamins.



Parents often ask their children's doctor to prescribe antibiotics without realizing the risk.

Antibiotics use can damage a child's microbiome.

such as in Nigeria, where women are increasingly using antibiotics to reduce menstrual cramps. In low- to middle-income countries, antibiotics are often seen as strong, magical medicines, capable of both curing and preventing a range of illness. In many countries people also take them to return to work or school when ill. One of the studies found that 63 percent of Chinese university students kept a personal antibiotic stock at home.

Parents may appeal for an antibiotic for their children so that they can go to work or for the children to return to school or daycare. A U.S. study found that 43 percent of parents of a child with cold symptoms believed that antibiotics were necessary.

In addition, some doctors are inclined to prescribe an antibiotic to maintain a good relationship with patients who expect to receive medication. Patients may not demand antibiotics outright, but rather infer their need for them by how they describe the severity of their illness or note that they worked in the past for a similar issue. People have become less willing to wait and let an illness run its course. The perception that there is a pill for ills of all kinds leads the public to demand immediate relief for symptoms from practitioners and to self-medicate.

Every time an antibiotic is given, money changes hands. This is especially a problem in low- and middle-income countries, where pharmacists are happy to dispense without a prescription to their customers. The rural health practitioners in China are paid every time they dispense an antibiotic as well. Such monetary incentives favor the wide use of antibiotics.

FUTURITY: Are some practitioners more likely to prescribe antibiotics?

BLASER: Our findings are consistent with the hypothesis that older physicians are more likely than their younger colleagues to prescribe antibiotics. For example, one study found that physicians over 30 were several times more likely to prescribe antibiotics for common respiratory conditions that don't necessarily require them. Another study found that physicians with more than 25 years in practice were disproportionately more likely to issue prescriptions of more than eight days.

FUTURITY: What misinformation did you find among the public?

BLASER: Many people believe that antibiotics are effective against bacterial and viral illnesses, lumping all types of pathogens together and adopting a "germs are germs" attitude. Others believe that taking antibiotics can't hurt. Across Europe, for example, 57 percent of people surveyed were unaware that antibiotics were ineffective against viruses, and 44 percent didn't know that antibiotics have no effect against colds or influenza.

FUTURITY: What other reasons did you find for inappropriate prescription of antibiotics?

BLASER: Antibiotics are commonly used across the world to self-treat health problems for which they were never intended,

FUTURITY: How can antibiotic overuse be addressed?

BLASER: Clinicians need to be better educated about the long-term effects on the microbiome and learn about better ways to speak with their patients about antibiotic risks and benefits. They also need to improve their communication about the consequences of antibiotic treatments and identify antibiotic alternatives.

Additional coauthors are from McGill University, the University of Arizona, and the University of Delaware.

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Sleeping Goals to Achieve Adequate Sleep

Make 2021 the year adequate sleep improves your mood, learning, and relationships

SARAH COWNLEY

Most Americans don't get enough sleep. In fact, a recent survey from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) has found that 85 percent of adults in the United States get less than seven hours of sleep a night.

Sleep deprivation has previously been shown to increase the risk of several health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. Due to this serious relationship between lack of sleep and disease and illness, individuals must work toward healthy sleep habits.

The survey conducted by the AASM found that 68 percent of participants lost sleep due to drinking alcohol past bedtime. Approximately 88 percent reported staying up late to binge-watch a TV show, 66 percent stayed up to read, 58 percent watched sports, and 50 percent played video games. Due to the pandemic, many people are struggling with sleep. About 22 percent of all people reported sleeping problems, and 19 percent say they get less sleep than before the pandemic.

Sleep Better in 2021

To get a better night's sleep, the AASM recommends setting a bedtime that allows at least seven hours of restful sleep a night. Develop a calming nightly routine with

such tasks as meditating or journaling. Limit all noise and distractions, including televisions from the bedroom, which should be dark, quiet, and cool.

Limit all alcohol after bedtime, cut off caffeine after lunchtime, and ditch any sugary snacks. Most people aren't aware that everything consumed close to bedtime could impact their sleep.

Many people struggle with AASM's suggestion of turning off electronic devices 30 minutes to an hour before bedtime, but it's one of the most important ways to ensure a good night's sleep.

"Despite the fact that many Americans are no longer commuting to and from work, it is paramount to establish and maintain morning and bedtime rituals, such as getting up and going to bed at regular times to achieve adequate sleep," said Dr. Kannan Ramar, president of the academy.

By not getting at least seven hours of sleep a night, risks for certain health conditions increase. These include obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and frequent mental distress. By following the advice by the AASM and getting the required amount of sleep, you can drastically reduce the risk of illness and disease. AASM has said that sleep makes you happier, healthier, and smarter. It can affect



Sleep is crucial to memory recall, thinking, and creativity. Many Americans are under-sleeping due to too much screentime before bed.

mood, learning, relationships, memory recall, thinking, and creativity. In today's world, we need to do everything we can to ensure we stay healthy and happy, and by getting enough sleep, you can improve many areas of your life.

So, make 2021 your year to focus on sleep. By following the guidelines from AASM, you will begin to feel better, look better, and be ready to face the new year.

Sarah Cownley earned a diploma in Nutritional Therapy from Health Sciences Academy in London, England, and she enjoys helping others by teaching healthy lifestyle changes through her personal consultations and with her regular contributions to the Doctors Health Press. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.

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Healthy Snacks for When You're on the Go

These 7 snacks can give you the nutrition you need—by the handful

TATIANA DENNING

Let's face it, life keeps us pretty busy. In order to have the energy we need to keep up with everything, it's important to eat healthy, drink plenty of water, and get a good night's sleep.

But when it comes to eating on the go, we may find ourselves grabbing a bag of chips or candy bar, and as a result, feeling tired later. Fortunately, there are some simple, fast, and healthy options that will not only boost your energy, but will leave you feeling good about your choices.

Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are a great on-the-go snack option loaded with fiber and healthy fats, such as omega-3 fatty acids. Not only are they tasty and convenient, but they've been correlated with some great health benefits, such as a decreased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, reduced inflammation, improved brain function, and a lowered risk of weight gain.

Among the healthiest are almonds, which have been shown to reduce cholesterol and the risk of heart disease; walnuts, which are a great source of omega-3s and have been shown to improve brain function; and pistachios, which reduce oxidative stress and lower blood glucose levels after a meal. Flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds are also tasty options that are loaded with nutrients and have a plethora of health benefits.

Veggies With Hummus

Vegetables are a great portable snack. To have them handy when you're ready to run out the door, be sure to clean and prepare your favorites, whether it be celery, carrots, grape tomatoes, broccoli, or whatever appeals to you. Store them in a pre-portioned, grab-and-go baggie or container. This way, you have no excuse not to have a healthy snack!

To add some flavor and great health benefits, try your veggies with hummus. Whether store-bought or homemade, hummus can help fight inflammation, promote good gut bacteria, and may even help reduce blood sugar levels and the risk of heart disease.

Smoothie

In my opinion, nothing beats a smoothie for an easy way to get in your fruits and vegetables for the day.

My go-to recipe includes greens (like spinach, lettuce, or kale), fruit (such as pineapple, banana, strawberries, or mango), a little plain yogurt, flaxseed, and almond milk. Voilà!—you probably have more nutrients in your smoothie than you may normally get in a whole day.



There are plenty of delicious options for a quick and healthy snack.

For a sweeter version, try my son's favorite recipe: almond or peanut butter, banana, spinach, yogurt, chocolate almond milk, flaxseed, and sometimes I even sneak in a little avocado—a great creamy substitute for yogurt. It's always a hit.

One key to a good smoothie is the blender, and my personal favorite is Vitamix. It's a workhorse, and will break down the toughest of ingredients. While it's a bit pricey, it's money well-spent, and we still have our same machine 12 years later, despite a ton of use.

While smoothies are a little more work than some other snacks, they're still easy to make, packed full of nutrients, and will keep you full for hours.

Sam's Millet and Flax Chips

I discovered Sam's Bakery products in a health food store when we lived in Florida. I wasn't sure I'd be crazy about chips made of millet and flax, but after trying a bag of cinnamon chips, I was hooked. I recommended my newfound discovery to my patients, and they all gave rave reviews.

If cinnamon isn't your thing, Sam's chips also come in flavors like cheese, garlic, plain, and salt and vinegar. Keep a bag handy, and if you feel a rumble in your tummy, two or three chips (they're large) usually do the trick.

While Sam's Bakery is local to Tampa, their products are sold around the country, and fortunately, I can still find them where I live now. They also make a variety of healthy bread options you can check out.

Fruit

Fruits like apples and bananas make great on-the-go snacks, and when combined with a protein-rich nut butter, they're both delicious and filling. Grapes are another great snack option, and in the heat of the

summer, nothing beats the cool feeling of frozen grapes (a tip a patient once gave me).

For another great go option, combine a handful of blueberries with some granola or steel-cut oats, mix them in a jar of yogurt the night before, and grab it on your way out the door, for an easy and nutrient-packed breakfast.

And while it's a little higher in sugar content, dehydrated fruit is another delicious snack. I purchased an Excalibur food dehydrator years ago, and it really helps save money on dried fruit in the long run. My son's favorites are pineapple, bananas, and apples, and when the latter two are sprinkled with a little cinnamon, as an added bonus, the kitchen always smells amazing!

Rice Cakes

If you're of my generation, rice cakes were essential in college. And while they're not the most enticing snack by themselves, at 35 calories each, they make a great foundation for a variety of toppings.

Some tasty topping ideas include peanut butter with apple or banana (always a winning combination), or perhaps you're more of a cream cheese with strawberries or avocado kind of person. For something a bit fancier, try tomato with fresh mozzarella and basil, topped with a bit of olive oil. Or how about goat cheese with sliced pears and a drizzle of honey?

Nuts are a great snack option loaded with fiber and healthy fats.

DEAN DROBOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

The options are limited only by your imagination.

Snack Bar

Whether homemade or store-bought, snack bars are a staple in the snack world. They require no refrigeration, can be tossed in your bag, and come in a variety of flavors and sizes.

But keep in mind that snack bars vary, from nutritious to something akin to a candy bar, so it's important to read labels. A healthy snack bar should have no more than 6 grams of sugar per 100 calories, a minimum of 3 grams of protein and fiber, and no more than 300 total calories.

To make sure it's not loaded with processed ingredients, look for familiar ingredients on the label. Some great brands to check out include Larabar, Kind bar, RXBAR, and Luna Bar—and the list is growing.

Hopefully, with a little preparation and forethought, you can grab one of these healthy snacks when you're on the go. Your brain, body, and waistline will be sure to thank you!



When we are hungry, we will often grab what is most convenient to eat, and that often means a hyper-processed snack that barely counts as food.

Tatiana Denning, D.O. is a preventive family medicine physician and owner of Simpura Weight Loss and Wellness. She believes in empowering her patients with the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain and improve their own health through weight management, healthy habits, and disease prevention.

Dry Hands Could Spell Trouble

If moisturizer isn't soothing your dry hands, you may have poor circulation

SARAH COWNLEY

Dry hands seem simple enough, don't they? Maybe at first glance. But the truth is, they can be a symptom of something far more sinister.

Like most people these days, you may be extra diligent with hand washing. It's a simple defense mechanism against the spread of COVID-19 and a staple of good hygiene.

Unfortunately, it can lead to dry hands, which could be even more pronounced in cooler, dryer, winter climates.

Thankfully, you can treat dry hands from regular washing or sanitizing with moisturizer.

But what if the moisturizer doesn't help? What if after bottles of moisturizer, your hands are still dry? Further, what if they are cold or discolored?

Dry hands are a symptom of poor circulation. When blood isn't circulating properly, your cells can't get the oxygen and nutrients they need to function properly.

Your circulatory system is responsible for delivering oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood all over your body. It's made up of your heart, blood vessels, and other organs, yet one slight blockage or inefficiency can



If your hands are consistently dry and you're experiencing cold or numb extremities, or fatigue, you may have poor circulation.

slow the whole thing down.

It's your job to keep more than 60,000 miles of blood vessels relaxed and functional so they can ensure blood circulates efficiently. When it does, you're at a lower risk for heart disease and a host of other illnesses.

Several factors play a role in circulation. Not smoking, controlling blood pressure, and increasing activity levels can all help—as can finding ways to boost nitric oxide production.

Nitric oxide is a natural chemical released by your blood vessels to help blood flow. When present, it can relax and dilate blood vessels to encourage better circulation.

Some foods can enhance nitric oxide production and may help improve circulation. Cayenne pepper, turmeric, beets, spinach, and garlic may all help reinforce food circulation. A host of other plant-based foods, although not having a direct effect on nitric oxide production, can also help improve circulation.

If your hands are consistently dry and you're experiencing other symptoms, such as cold or numb extremities, brittle nails, or fatigue, you won't be able to wash it away. Talk to your doctor and consider ways to boost circulation.

Sarah Cownley earned a diploma in Nutritional Therapy from Health Sciences Academy in London, England, and she enjoys helping others by teaching healthy lifestyle changes through her personal consultations and with her regular contributions to the Doctors Health Press. This article was originally published on Bel Marra Health.

Kids With Mental Disorders Surge as Pandemic Topples Support Systems

Stabilizing social connections and support systems have disappeared, leaving parents and children in crisis

CHRISTINE HERMAN, CORY TURNER & RHITU CHATTERJEE

A bag of Doritos, that's all Princess wanted.

Her mom calls her Princess, but her real name is Lindsey. She's 17 and lives with her mom, Sandra, a nurse, near Atlanta. On May 17, 2020, Lindsey decided she didn't want breakfast; she wanted Doritos. So she left home and walked to the Family Dollar store, taking her pants off along the way, while her mom followed on foot, talking to the police on her phone as they went.

Lindsey has autism. It can be hard for her to communicate and navigate social situations. She thrives on routine and gets special help at school. Or got help, before the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools and forced tens of millions of children to stay home.

Sandra said that's when their living hell started.

"It's like her brain was wired," she said. "She'd just put on her jacket, and she's out the door. And I'm chasing her."

On May 17, Sandra chased her all the way to Family Dollar. Hours later, Lindsey was in jail, charged with assaulting her mom. (KHN and NPR are not using the family's last name.)

Lindsey is one of almost 3 million children in the United States who have a serious emotional or behavioral health condition. When the pandemic forced schools and doctors' offices to close last spring, it also cut children off from trained teachers and therapists who understand their needs.

As a result, many, like Lindsey, spiraled into emergency rooms and even police custody. Federal data shows a nationwide surge of kids in mental health crisis during the pandemic—a surge that's further taxing an already overstretched safety net.

'Take Her'

Even after schools closed, Lindsey continued to wake up early, get dressed, and wait for the bus. When she realized it had stopped coming, Sandra said, her daughter just started walking out of the house and wandering a few times a week.

In those situations, Sandra did what many families in crisis report they've had to do since the pandemic began: race through the short list of places she could call for help.

First, came the calls to her state's mental health crisis hotline, but they often put Sandra on hold.

"This is ridiculous," she said of the wait. "It's supposed to be a crisis team. But I'm on hold for 40, 50 minutes. And by the time you get on the phone, [the crisis] is done."

Then there's the local hospital's emergency room, but Sandra said she had taken Lindsey there for previous crises and been told there isn't much they can do.

That's why, on May 17, when Lindsey walked to Family Dollar in just a red T-shirt and underwear to get that bag of Doritos, Sandra called the last option on her list: the police.

Sandra arrived at the store before the police and paid for the chips. According to Sandra and police records, when an officer approached, Lindsey grew agitated and hit her mom hard on the back.

Sandra said she explained to the officer: "She's autistic. You know, I'm OK. I'm a nurse. I just need to take her home and give her medication."

Lindsey takes a mood stabilizer, but because she left home before breakfast, she hadn't taken it that morning. The officer asked if Sandra wanted to take her to the nearest hospital.

The hospital wouldn't be able to help Lindsey, Sandra said. It hadn't before.

"They already told me, 'Ma'am, there's nothing we can do.' They just check her labs, it's fine, and they ship her back home. There's nothing [the hospital] can do," she recalled telling the officer.

Sandra asked if the police could drive her daughter home so the teen could take her medication, but the officer said no, they couldn't. The only thing they could do, the officer said, was to take Lindsey to jail for hitting her mom.

"I've tried everything," Sandra said, exasperated. She paced the parking lot, feeling hopeless, sad, and out of options.

Finally, in tears, she told the officers, "Take her."

Lindsey doesn't like to be touched and fought back when authorities tried to handcuff her. Several officers wrestled her to the ground. At that point, Sandra protested and said an officer threatened to arrest her, too, if she didn't back away. Lindsey was taken to jail, where she spent much of the night until Sandra was able to post bail.

Clayton County Solicitor-General Charles Brooks denied that Sandra was threatened with arrest; he said that while Lindsey's case is still pending, his office "is working to ensure that the resolution in this matter involves a plan for medication compliance and not punitive action."

Sandra isn't alone in her experience. Multiple families interviewed for this story reported similar experiences of calling in the police when a child was in crisis because caretakers didn't feel they had any other option.

'The Whole System Is Really Grinding to a Halt'

Roughly 6 percent of U.S. children ages 6 through 17 are living with serious emotional or behavioral difficulties, including children with autism, severe anxiety, depression, and trauma-related mental health conditions.

Many of these children depend on schools for access to vital therapies. When schools and doctors' offices stopped providing in-person services last spring, kids were untethered from the people and supports they rely on.

"The lack of in-person services is really detrimental," said Dr. Susan Duffy, a pediatrician and professor of emergency medicine at Brown University.

Marjorie, a mother in Florida, said her 15-year-old son has suffered during these disruptions. He has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder, a condition marked by frequent and persistent hostility. Little things—such as being asked to do schoolwork—can send him into a rage, leading to holes punched in walls, broken doors, and violent threats. (Marjorie asked that the family's last name or her son's first name not be used to protect her son's privacy and future prospects.)

The pandemic has shifted both school and her son's therapy sessions online. But Marjorie said virtual therapy isn't working because her son doesn't focus well during sessions and tries to watch TV instead. Lately, she has simply been canceling them.

"I was paying for appointments and there was no therapeutic value," Marjorie said.

The issues cut across socioeconomic lines—affecting families with private insurance, like Marjorie, as well as those who receive coverage through Medicaid, a federal-state program that provides health insurance to low-income

people and those with disabilities.

In the first few months of the pandemic, between March and May, children on Medicaid received 44 percent fewer outpatient mental health services—including therapy and in-home support—compared to the same time period in 2019, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. That's even after accounting for increased telehealth appointments.

And while the nation's emergency rooms have seen a decline in overall visits, there was a relative increase in mental health visits for kids in 2020 compared with 2019.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, from April to October 2020, hospitals across the United States saw a 24 percent increase in the proportion of mental health emergency visits for children ages 5 to 11, and a 31 percent increase for children ages 12 to 17.

"Proportionally, the number of mental health visits is far more significant than it has been in the past," said Duffy. "Not only are we seeing more children, more children are being admitted" to inpatient care.

That's because there are fewer outpatient services now available to children, she said, and because the conditions of the children showing up at ERs "are more serious."

This crisis isn't only making life harder for these kids and their families, but it's also stressing the entire health care system.

Child and adolescent psychiatrists working in hospitals around the country said children are increasingly "boarding" in emergency departments for days, waiting for inpatient admission to a regular hospital or psychiatric facility.

Before the pandemic, there was already a shortage of inpatient psychiatric beds for children, said Dr. Christopher Bellonci, a child psychiatrist at Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston. That shortage has only gotten worse as hospitals cut capacity to allow for more physical distancing within psychiatric units.

"The whole system is really grinding to a halt at a time when we have an unprecedented need," Bellonci said.

Continued on B6

Parents are struggling as therapy and support services for children have been canceled or have become less accessible during the pandemic.



The issues cut across socioeconomic lines—affecting families with private insurance as well as those who receive coverage through Medicaid.



Childhood is a time to roam with friends and learn to navigate the world. During a pandemic, that takes some extra help from parents.

Strategies to Reduce Your Kids' Pandemic Stress

Routine, activity, and social connection are key to children's well-being during lockdown

AMANDA SHEFFIELD MORRIS & JENNIFER HAYS-GRUDO

Parents are dealing with huge demands on their time and energy with many children not attending school or involved in regular activities. As the pandemic continues to wreak havoc on families, routines have collapsed, patience is wearing thin, and self-care is a distant memory.

Decades of research have taught us that adversity during childhood has damaging effects on health and development. Many studies have shown that kids who have faced abuse, neglect, and family conflict struggle forming friendships, have academic difficulties, and face physical and mental health problems in adolescence and adulthood.

Fortunately, developmental scientists have identified ways to help children survive and thrive during times of adversity. The beneficial effects of protective and nurturing experiences are powerful antidotes to stress and adversity and prepare children to cope with hard times for years to come.

Families worried about possible long-term effects of pandemic-related disruption can learn from these proven strategies. Here are 10 ways parents can foster children's resilience during challenging times.

1. Connect With One Another

Make time to talk, listen, and play without distractions. Be sure children know they are loved unconditionally. This can include taking breaks to check in during the day when learning and working at home, having a special bedtime routine that includes talking about the day, taking walks together, or playing favorite games. Making the effort to connect helps children know they're valued and creates a sense of security.

2. Support Children's Friendships

Think about ways for children to play together outdoors, talk via technology, or play a video game virtually with friends.

Some families are creating safe zones or bubbles, where they allow children to pick a close friend or two (whose family is practicing recommended pandemic precautions) whom they can interact with more closely. Maintaining friendships gives children opportunities to learn from peers and reduces stress, providing support and acceptance.

3. Find Ways Children Can Help Others

Talk about how others are also struggling. Encourage children to donate toys they've outgrown, save money for a special cause or help a neighbor with errands such as shopping, bringing in mail, doing yard work, or dog-walking. When you do things for others in the community, include your children and talk about why you do it. This helps children learn about the needs of others and cultivate empathy.

4. Help Children Stay Involved in Clubs or Groups

Some groups that work well during a pandemic include outdoor Scouting, Zoom clubs, and other special-interest clubs such as outdoor sports, fishing, hiking, or biking. Being part of a group helps children feel a sense of belonging and promotes identity development. It can also help build morals and values and even promote academic success.

5. Stay in Touch With Important Adults

Children benefit from relationships with grown-ups, such as grandparents and teachers. They can be another source of support and someone to talk to about problems or successes. They're particularly important when parents are unavailable due to work or other obligations. Help kids stay connected through Zoom, email, phone calls, FaceTime, and special activities such as outdoor events. Some social media groups have targeted programs to link children with others to play games or chat.

6. Keep Up With Hobbies

Boredom is a parent's worst enemy. Hav-

ing an enjoyable hobby is rewarding for kids; it provides engaging leisure time and opportunities to master something. Such activities provide connections with others, can teach discipline and how to manage one's emotions and behavior, and promote self-esteem. Explore art, music, science projects, writing, chess, and other hobbies that develop physical, artistic, and intellectual skills while providing hours of enjoyment.

7. Be Physically Active

Make exercise a part of family routines. Take walks or ride bikes, play active video games such as Wii, go to the park, stretch, or do yoga together. Exercise has many of the same benefits as hobbies. It also helps children handle the physical effects of stress on the body and improves mood and mental health.

8. Create Routines

Routines are a powerful nonverbal signal to children's brains that they are safe and that life is predictable. Keeping a routine can reduce the number of conflicts, and children know what to do and expect during different points of the day. Create and display (together, ideally) daily or weekly calendars with words or pictures that remind children when learning, playing, resting, sleeping, and eating activities occur. Invent little rituals that comfort as well as accomplish goals, especially at bedtime: read, tell stories, sing a special song, say a prayer, or list loved ones. Such activities ensure better sleep than allowing children to drift off watching a video. Children may push back if they've gotten used to less structure during the day, but most will welcome knowing what to expect.

9. Keep Realistic Expectations for Learning

Children's involvement in schooling varies widely during the pandemic, with some hardly affected and others learning entirely at home. Virtual schooling requires parents to be more involved than before: monitoring assignments, checking in during the day, and seeking

help when children are struggling.

While schoolwork is indeed important, not all learning takes place in class. Involve children in opportunities to learn during everyday tasks such as cooking (measuring, timing), gardening, shopping (figuring sales prices, adding), and games (cards, dominoes, board games) that build memory and thinking skills.

Read with your child every day. Depending on the level of the book, you can read to your child or take turns reading pages.

10. Maintain a Healthy, Safe Home

In addition to maintaining COVID-19 precautions, make nutritious meals, declutter and organize toys, games, hobby supplies and learning materials. Find ways to involve children in preparing meals, organizing their work and play spaces, cleaning up after activities, and sharing in conversations about family rules. Chaos and clutter are the enemies of calm. Creating safe and orderly spaces helps children manage stress. Eating healthy foods together benefits physical and mental health.

Parenting in the Time of COVID

Many parents naturally do the things listed above. However, with increased stress and demands on time, these activities are difficult to maintain. Now is a good time to pick a few of these strategies and get back on track.

Every family is different, and what's appropriate differs by children's ages, whether infants and toddlers, school-age children, or teens and young adults. But adjusted for age and circumstances, these tried-and-true techniques can help youngsters make it through tough times and come out the other side OK.

Amanda Sheffield Morris is a professor of human development and family science at Oklahoma State University, and Jennifer Hays-Grudo is a professor of psychology and behavioral sciences at Oklahoma State University. This article was first published on *The Conversation*.

Kids With Mental Disorders Surge as Pandemic Topples Support Systems

Continued from B5

'A Signal That the Rest of Your System Doesn't Work'

Psychiatrists on the front lines share the frustrations of parents struggling to find help for their children.

Part of the problem is there have never been enough psychiatrists and therapists trained to work with children and intervene in the early stages of their illness, said Dr. Jennifer Havens, a child psychiatrist at New York University.

"Tons of people showing up in emergency rooms in bad shape is a signal that the rest of your system doesn't work," she said.

Too often, Havens said, services aren't available until children are older—and in crisis.

"Often, for people who don't have access to services, we wait until they're too big to be managed."

While the pandemic has made life harder for Marjorie and her son in Florida, she said

it has always been difficult to find the support and care he needs. Last fall, he needed a psychiatric evaluation, but the nearest specialist who would accept her commercial insurance was 100 miles away, in Alabama.

"Even when you have the money or you have the insurance, it is still a travesty," Marjorie said. "You cannot get help for these kids."

Parents are frustrated, and so are psychiatrists on the front lines. Dr. C.J. Glawe, who leads the psychiatric crisis department at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, said that once a child is stabilized after a crisis, it can be hard to explain to parents that they may

not be able to find follow-up care anywhere near their home.

"Especially when I can clearly tell you I know exactly what you need, I just can't give it to you," Glawe said. "It's demoralizing."

When states and communities fail to provide children the services they need to live at home, kids can deteriorate and even wind up in jail, like Lindsey. At that point, Glawe said, the cost and level of care required will be even higher, whether that's hospitalization or long stays in residential treatment facilities.

That's exactly the scenario Sandra, Lindsey's mom, is hoping to avoid for her Princess. "For me, as a nurse and as a provider, that

will be the last thing for my daughter," she said. "It's like [state and local leaders] leave it to the school and the parent to deal with, and they don't care. And that's the problem. It's sad because, if I'm not here ..."

Her voice trailed off as tears welled. "She didn't ask to have autism."

To help families like Sandra's and Marjorie's, advocates said, all levels of government need to invest in creating a mental health system that's accessible to anyone who needs it.

But given that many states have seen their revenues drop due to the pandemic, there's a concern that services will instead be cut—at a time when the need has never been greater.

Christine Herman, *Side Effects Public Media*; and Cory Turner, *NPR*; and Rhitu Chatterjee, *NPR*. This story is part of a reporting partnership that includes *NPR*, *Illinois Public Media*, and *Kaiser Health News*.



The pandemic has hurt most children's mental health.

JORDAN WHITTY/UNSPASH



There may never be a perfect time to work on your dreams.

The 15-Minute Rule

It's hard to find the time for our dreams—but what if it's just 15 minutes?

HANNAH BRENCHER

The start of a new year overwhelms me.

I love the idea of shifting gears and walking into a new year. I love the possibility of a fresh calendar. But I am overwhelmed by all the things I want to do, and all the things I think I can magically begin just because January 1 arrives at the front of the calendar.

I'm one of those people who believes I can start running, eat all the kale, magically organize my entire life, and become that friend who sends birthday cards in the mail overnight.

I guess you could say I am a recovering resolutions addict.

The new year is tricky because we formulate these big, life-shifting goals and then we wonder why nothing changes. Why we quickly shelf those goals and go back to old habits.

I've learned it's because building discipline takes time. It is a muscle we need to train little by little. Progress is usually made out of small things done on repeat.

At the start of 2019, I was feeling worn out before the new year even arrived on the calendar. I had things I wanted to do, but I was drained by the idea of setting another set of lofty resolutions that would look like failures by mid-January.

So I refocused my thinking. I decided to zoom in small. I picked one primary goal:

Read more, scroll less.

Instead of assuming I had to go out to the bookstore to fill my shelves with new reads that might entice me to create this new habit of mine, I decided to start with



On days when you're paralyzed by the tasks ahead, set a timer for 15 minutes and get to it.

We don't think 15 minutes would make us feel like we're moving forward, but it will.

what I had. I pulled a book off the shelf and I set a timer on my phone for 15 minutes. Just 15 minutes to read a few pages of a book I already had.

A couple years removed from that "read more, scroll less" goal, this is how most of my life operates: in 15-minute increments.

I call it the "15-minute rule." It's no fuss. It's not fancy. You just set the timer and you start.

Fifteen minutes to go for a walk outside. Fifteen minutes to clear your mind and journal. Fifteen minutes to write some good sentences or call a friend just to hear their voice and check in.

Most of us have 15 minutes. We say we don't, but we could find the space.

We could put down the phone. We could watch less of that show. We could wake up a few minutes earlier. I think we buy the lie that we need to have the whole day or a whole hour to invest in something we care about. We don't think 15 minutes would make us feel like we're moving forward, but it will. If you don't try it, you might keep waiting on that miraculous free 3-hour time block or that day off only to find it never shows up.

We'll never find the time. We have to make it, and we have to decide that even the smallest actions are going to matter, they're going to stack up and contribute to much bigger victories ahead.

On days where I feel overwhelmed by the tasks ahead of me, I set a timer and get to it. I remind myself: you can do anything for 15 minutes.

The tasks range from big to small: Clean the cupboard beneath the bath-

room sink. Go through my inbox. Call and make that doctor's appointment. Scribble out a few cards and put them in the mailbox. With just 15 minutes, I make progress in a direction that matters to me. I change the landscape around me and get closer to the goals that really matter.

If you don't try it, you might keep waiting on that miraculous free 3-hour time block or that day off only to find it never shows up.

It's really all about looking for that tiny thread within a larger task and beginning to pull. Over the years, I've found it doesn't just work for the tasks you're dreading or tasks that need to get done, but it works even more masterfully for things you've always said you wanted to do. Those things you've quickly pushed to the side with the excuse of, "I just don't have enough time."

I've wanted to write a novel for years. This idea sat in my brain for so long and haunted me with each passing day. I'm a believer in not letting inspiration and ideas sit dormant for too long, so I pulled out a notebook I already had one day and I set my timer. Over the next 15 minutes, I began to do research for the novel. It wasn't earth-shattering. I was simply using 15 minutes of time to watch a TED talk and scan through some articles. But there was something about carving out that time that lit a fire in me.

It was a small step in the right direction. I was surprised to see it felt like coming back to myself. I decided I was going to keep stoking the fire, fifteen minutes at a time. The number of minutes seems small, but any larger and I'd convince myself there just wasn't enough time.

It doesn't need to happen every single day. It's not about getting the 15-minutes down perfectly. It's about deciding to show up and put something that matters at the forefront for just a moment in your day.

It might take 15 minutes to write 250 words. That's 250 more words than you had yesterday.

It might take 15 minutes to research some new recipes, but that's an arsenal of family meals that didn't exist this morning.

It might take 15 minutes to start cleaning out the closet in your office. You might not finish that big task today, but you're a little bit closer than you were before you set the timer.

If you're feeling like life has been knocked out of you, or you don't know how to start this new year, it may be time to look around the readjust.

You don't need to add more to your already full life. You don't need to make big investments or buy fancy gadgets to make progress. You just need to clear the space, maybe just for 15 minutes. You just need to start right where you are with what you already have.

Hannah Brencher is a blogger, TED speaker, and entrepreneur. Her book, *"Fighting Forward: Your Nitty-Gritty Guide to Beating the Lies that Hold You Back,"* is available now. This article was originally published on *Becoming-Minimalist.com*

WISE HABITS

Savor What You Dread and Avoid

Our preconceived judgments can decide our experience—if we let them

LEO BABAUTA

Today my sons and I were standing at the edge of the pool, on a cold day, knowing that the water we were about to jump into was freezing.

It was Day 27 of my first 40-day discomfort challenge and we were dreading the cold water.

We knew it would be shockingly cold, because we've jumped into it for the past 26 days. We really didn't want to do it, but we're committed to this.

And then I invited myself to a mindset shift: Can I bring curiosity to this moment?

This moment I have already judged as bad, could I instead let go of my fixed ideas and just bring curiosity?

What is this moment like, when I've dropped my judgments, fixed views, preconceived notions?

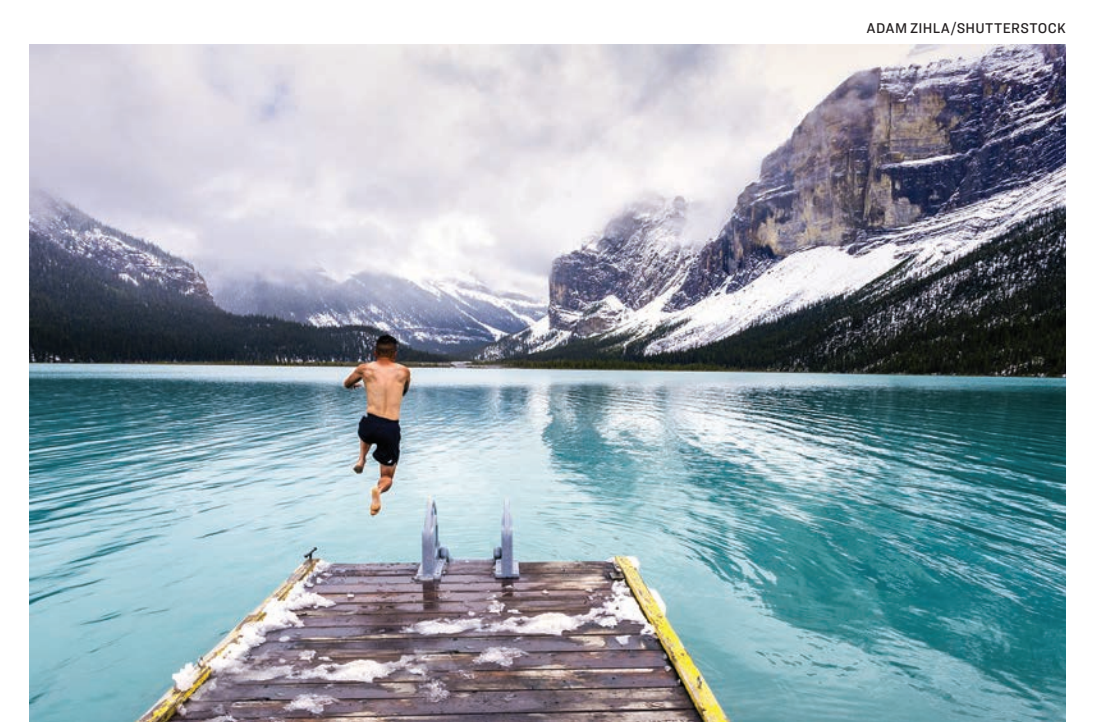
It becomes much more open. Much more filled with possibility.

From this place of possibility, I wondered if there was something to savor right now. Is there anything I can enjoy, appreciate, find sacred and beautiful?

I found a lot to savor: the chilly air, the intensely blue sky and low-lying soft clouds, the quiet neighborhood with planes flying overhead, and birds calling out to us. I savored this moment of challenge with my sons, this day of being fully alive and able to do meaningful work with others, this day of having loved ones here and scattered elsewhere whom I care deeply about.

I found a lot to savor, and suddenly this became a moment of freedom and love. I jumped in.

Leo Babauta is the author of six books, the writer of *Zen Habits*, a blog with over 2 million subscribers, and the creator of several online programs to help you master your habits. Visit ZenHabits.net



Sometimes we decide to make a moment unwelcome, but when we open up to it, it changes.

POSITIVE AGING

Caregiver Survival Guide

Caring for a loved one can leave you stressed and depressed if you're not prepared

MARILYN MURRAY WILLISON

Full disclosure: Even though I've been obsessed with health issues my entire life, I've never been interested in working in the medical field. Most of my classmates from my all-girls high school chose nursing as a career, but I was so freaked out by hospitals and illness that I was the only teenager in my class to actively boycott working as a candy stripper.

But life has a funny way of catching up with you. So, more than five decades after

Millions of Americans are feeling the strain of caring for a loved one. Helpful insights and practical advice can lessen some of that burden.

my high school graduation, I found myself firmly in the throes of a family medical situation, and I was a caregiver. Unfortunately, my husband was battling lung cancer, and I, for the first time ever, had an adult who looked to me to make sure that everything from appointments to comfort level to dietary restrictions to medications was maintained and observed.

Because I was so clueless about the role of caregiver, I did what I always do when I need help: visited my local bookstore. I found exactly what I needed in a comprehensive but lighthearted book called "You'd Better Not Die or I'll Kill You: A Caregivers Survival Guide to Keeping You in Good Health and Good Spirits" by Jane Heller.

romantic comedies tackle such a daunting subject? Heller said, "I wanted to help all of us take care of ourselves so we're able to take care of those we love. ... I wanted to express (and encourage you to express) the emotions we all have when caring for a loved one but are often too guilt-ridden, fearful, or embarrassed to say what's really on our minds. ... I wanted to reach out to other caregivers ... and let them vent or offer inspiration or serve up a helpful tip or two. ... I wanted to be the cheery, knowledgeable companion I wish I had had."

According to the Caregiver Action Network, 40 percent to 70 percent of caregivers exhibit some symptoms of clinical depression. And if you're caring for a spouse, your symptoms of depression or anxiety may be as much as six times higher than that of noncaregivers. If you are caring for a parent, that rate will be twice as high as for noncaregivers. This is important information, because more than 90 million Americans are currently caregivers, which means a large percentage of the adult population in the U.S. is walking around feeling stretched and pulled in a variety of different directions.

One thing I learned being my husband's caregiver is that my disappointments, fears, and tears would not help his situation. My job was to be fully in control and completely in the moment. If I hadn't avoided the candy strippers back in 1966, I probably would have known that already.

Marilyn Murray Willison has had a varied career as a six-time nonfiction author, columnist, motivational speaker, and journalist in both the UK and the U.S. She is the author of The Self-Empowered Woman blog and the award-winning memoir "One Woman, Four Decades, Eight Wishes." She can be reached at www.marilynwillison.com. To find out more about Marilyn and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com. Copyright 2021 Creators.com

According to the Caregiver Action Network, 40 percent to 70 percent of caregivers exhibit some symptoms of clinical depression.

The reason I found this book so useful is that Heller wisely avoids the "You need to do A, B, C, etc." approach of lecturing the reader about the right way to care for a loved one. Instead, she shares three helpful resources: her personal experience helping her husband cope with a chronic case of life-threatening Crohn's disease, the insights of other nonmedical individuals who had cared for an ill loved one, and advice from a variety of health care professionals.

Not everyone in Heller's book is dealing with a sick spouse. "Dear Abby" columnist Jeanne Phillips tells about the conflicts that arise when a parent is older and ill. And we also learn about the challenges involved when caring for a sick child.

So why did a successful author of ro-



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